



Australian Competition & Consumer Commission

PO Box 1199
Dickson ACT 2602
470 Northbourne Ave
Dickson ACT 2602
Australia



Ph (02) 6243 1123
Fax (02) 6243 1122

Our Ref: c2002/51
Your Ref:
Contact Officer: Emma Hatcher
Contact Phone: +61 (0)2 6243 1113

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APEC Member Economies
APEC E-Commerce Steering Group Meeting
Chang Rai
THAILAND
14-15 February 2003

Dear APEC Member Economies

Congratulations on the conclusion of the 'Recommendations to APEC Ministers on Consumer Protection for the Online Environment' at your last meeting in Acapulco in August 2002. Australia believes that this is an exciting initiative with the potential to benefit consumers and businesses both within APEC member economies, and worldwide.

The evolution of the global marketplace, and in particular the development of e-commerce, presents many challenges to consumer protection authorities around the globe. Traders, particularly those with unscrupulous objectives, engaged in international commerce do not recognise and respect traditional legal boundaries. However legal enforcement authorities are required to respect traditional legal boundaries in the protection of consumers' interests. Accordingly, a high level of international cooperation between consumer protection law enforcement authorities is crucial in obtaining the common objective of 'protecting consumers worldwide'.

The participating agencies of the International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network (ICPEN) are committed to this high level of cooperation. The Network is a unique partnership that fosters cooperative efforts to tackle consumer problems associated with cross border transactions. Protection of honest businesses and consumers from scams, rip-offs and fraudulent activities is essential to creating opportunities for economies to achieve their full potential by enhancing consumer confidence.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE



You may recall at the last meeting Australia gave a brief presentation on the work of the ICPEN (or as it was formerly known at the time - IMSN). At that meeting we presented an overview of some of ICPEN's key activities including the international consumer complaint and information site www.econsumer.gov, and the annual Internet Sweep Days. In fact, a number of economies represented at the 7th ECSG meeting may have participated in the Network's most recent Sweep activity which took place earlier this week – in this initiative some 24 ICPEN member countries participated in a Sweep that targeted misleading travel claims. A copy of the ICPEN Media Release accompanies this letter for your information

I would like to offer a detailed presentation on how APEC member economies could participate in future ICPEN sweeps or conduct effective sweeps of the internet in accordance with their priorities and the importance or value of such sweeps.

This year, Australia (the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission – ACCC) is the President of ICPEN. In this role the ACCC is hoping to establish an ongoing relationship between the APEC ECSG and ICPEN as a part of a broader initiative to raise the profile of consumer protection enforcement issues in the region. To this end, I would like to extend an invitation for a representative of the APEC ECSG, or alternatively an ECSG country that is not currently a member of ICPEN, to observe the next meeting of ICPEN, which will be held in Australia in early April 2003. I would envisage that this will facilitate a greater understanding of the activities of each forum, and provide the opportunity to explore closer relationships in consumer protection enforcement.

Accordingly, I would encourage economies present at the ECSG meeting to consider the work of ICPEN and discuss possible future partnerships between the APEC ECSG and ICPEN, including observership at the April 2003 meeting.

If APEC Member countries would like to take up either of these offers would you please contact me at your earliest convenience on tel: +61 2 6243 1132 or fax: +61 2 6243 1122 or email: sitesh.bhojani@accc.gov.au or Ms Emma Hatcher of the ACCC's International Unit on tel: +61 2 6243 1113 or fax: +61 2 6243 1158 or email: emma.hatcher@accc.gov.au

Yours sincerely



Sitesh Bhojani
Acting Chairman – Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC)
President – International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network (ICPEN)